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LOVE OF LIFE IN NINE DEVELOPED AND UNDERDEVELOPEDCOUNTRIES

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Abstract

The present research sought to explore the differences between developed and underdeveloped countries on the Love of Life Scale (LLS). Nine samples (N =3,799) took part in the study. They were university students from Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Algeria, Malaysia, India, Iran, and USA. Sex-related differences in LLS were significant only in Kuwait (in favor of males) and India (in favor of females). The samples of Malaysia and U.S.A. obtained the highest mean LLS score, followed by participants from Qatar, India, and Kuwait, (males), and India, Iran, Qatar, and Algeria (females), respectively. The Pearson correlation of LLS with the World Happiness Ranking and the Gross Domestic Product per capita was positive, but negative with the unemployment percentage. However, the correlations did not reach statistical significance because of the small number of the samples. It was concluded that the samples from high-income countries tend to have high LLS scores.

Keywords

Love of life, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Algeria, Malaysia, India, Iran, USA

LOVE OF LIFE IN NINE DEVELOPED AND UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT *The present research sought to explore the differences between developed and underdeveloped countries on the Love of Life Scale (LLS). Nine samples (N =3,799) took part in the study. They were university students from Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Algeria, Malaysia, India, Iran, and USA. Sex-related differences in LLS were significant only in Kuwait (in favor of males) and India (in favor of females). The samples of Malaysia and U.S.A. obtained the highest mean LLS score, followed by participants from Qatar, India, and Kuwait, (males), and India, Iran, Qatar, and Algeria (females), respectively. The Pearson correlation of LLS with the World Happiness Ranking and the Gross Domestic Product per capita was positive, but negative with the unemployment percentage. However, the correlations did not reach statistical significance because of the small number of the samples. It was concluded that the samples from high-income countries tend to have high LLS scores.*

KEYWORDS: *Love of life, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Algeria, Malaysia, India, Iran, USA.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary psychology, three trends can be identified as follows: a greater investment in matters of religion and spirituality; globalization of the field; and most recently, the emergence of positive psychology (Abdel-Khalek & Scioli, 2010). Based on the vibrant activity in positive psychology in the last few decades, i.e., the number of published research studies and books, as well as an increasing number of dissertations and international conferences, Abdel-Khalek (2007) stated that we are in the age of positive psychology.

The main concept in positive psychology is subjective well-being (SWB), including happiness, satisfaction with life, mental health, optimism, hope, resilience, and religiosity, among other constructs (Argyle, 2002; Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003; Carr, 2004; Chang, 2001; Diener, 1998, 1999; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002; Lopez & Snyder, 2003; Lucas & Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky, 2001; Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Veenhoven, 2011). This interest in positive psychology also extends to Arab researchers (e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2004a,b, 2006, 2011, 2014, 2015; Tiliouine, 2009). Love of life (LL) was proposed by Abdel-Khalek (2007) as one of the components of SWB.

Love of life (LL) represents a generally positive evaluation of one's own life as well as positive regard toward it. It denotes holding fast to, and grasping at, life, as well as a pleasurable attachment to, and appreciation for life. It was hypothesized that there is a continuum of LL, ranging from hating life to loving life. It was also hypothesized that LL intersects with many SWB concepts, mainly happiness, and that there would be a positive association between LL and SWB.

A specific number of research studies was carried out in this domain. Previous reports indicated significant positive associations between LL scale scores with the scores on the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, Martin, & Lu,1995), satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), self- esteem (Rosenberg, 1989), extraversion (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975), optimism, hope, mental health, physical health, and religiosity. Other studies found that Kuwaiti undergraduates obtained higher LL mean scores than did their Egyptian and Lebanese counterparts. However, American college students obtained a slightly higher mean score than did Kuwaiti students (see: Abdel-Khalek, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013b, 2014, 2015; Abdel-Khalek, Eid, & El-Nayal, 2010; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2011, 2012).

In a similar vein, Al-Fadly (2009) found significant positive associations between LL and emotional intelligence. Al-Saeedy (2009) reported significant correlations of LL with happiness and optimism. Al-

Ayoub and Abdel-Khalek (2012) reported significant correlations of LL with mental health, social support, social communication (positive), and somatic symptoms (negative) among a sample of elderly people. Using a sample of elderly (N = 380), Abdel-Khalek and Al-Huweila (2013) indicated significant associations of LL with the self-rating scales of mental and physical health, satisfaction with life, happiness, positive affect, and religiosity. Furthermore, LL significantly correlated with extraversion (positive), neuroticism and psychoticism (negative) (Abdel-Khalek, 2013a).

All of the afore-mentioned studies were carried out using only one or two samples. A cross-cultural comparison in love of life among samples from different countries is highly needed. Therefore, the main objectives of the present research were (a) to investigate the sex-related differences in LL, (b) to compare the LL mean scores between undergraduates from different developed and underdeveloped countries, and (c) to explore the associations between LL and global indicators of SWB, such as the World Happiness Report, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and unemployment percentage.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Method

The study used the descriptive correlational design.

2.2 Participants

Nine convenience samples were recruited (N = 3,799). They were from five Arab countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, and Algeria, in addition to participants from Malaysia, India, Iran, and USA. All participants were university students studying in their respective countries. Their ages ranged between 18 and 39.

Table 1 below sets out the number of participants from each of the nine countries.

2.3 Assessment

2.3.1 The Love of Life Scale (LLS)

The LLS (Abdel-Khalek, 2004b, 2007, 2013b) contains 16 short statements (e.g., "There are many things that make me love life") answered on a five-point Likert format, anchored by 1: No and 5: Very much. The total score could range from 16 to 80, with higher scores indicating a higher love of life. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .91, and the one-week test-retest reliability was .81 among college students, indicating high internal consistency and temporal stability. Factor analysis yielded three high-loaded factors labeled: "Positive attitude towards life", "Happy consequences of love of life", and "Meaningfulness of life", with moderate factor correlations. Construct validity was adequately demonstrated by significant positive correlations with measures of happiness, optimism, self- esteem, hope, satisfaction with life, and extraversion (Abdel-Khalek, 2007).

A principal components analysis of the total scores on the LLS and the below-mentioned six questionnaires yielded a general factor of well-being, in which the LLS loaded at .78 onto this factor, indicating good construct validity. A multiple regression revealed that the best predictors of love of life were tagged by happiness, optimism, self-esteem, and hope, respectively. The LLS has three equivalent versions: Arabic, English, and Persian.

It is particularly noteworthy that there was no claim to suggest that the LLS assesses extreme situations and outcomes such as Ralston's (2004) case, nor does the LL have a relation to the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of life or love instinct (Campbell, 1996, p. 411). Rather, this scale was intended to evaluate the general positive regard toward life a proposed construct in the SWB domain.

2.3.2 The World Happiness Report (WHR)

The WHR classifies 157 country as per happiness rates on the basis of specific criteria (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2017). In the present study the WHR of each of the nine countries was correlated with the LLS scores.

2.3.3 Per Capita Income and Unemployment

These two country-level demographic parameters were based on the statistics of the World Bank (www.theglobaleconomy.com). These parameters were correlated with the LLS scores.

2.4 Procedure

The LLS, along with other questionnaires, was administered to students in their classrooms during class time in their respective countries. They volunteered for the study after the tester had briefly explained its purpose and assured them of its anonymity. Students who did not want to participate were allowed to leave. The consent procedure was oral. The Arab participants answered the Arab version of the scale, whereas students from Malaysia, the USA and India responded to the English form of the scale. A Persian version was used with students from Iran (Atef Vahid, Dadfar, Abdel-Khalek, & Lester, 2016).

2.5 Statistical Analysis

SPSS (2009) was used for the statistical analysis of the data. Means, standard deviations, t-tests, and Cohen's d for effect size and Pearson correlation coefficients were applied.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, the differences between the mean scores (t), and the effect size (d).

Table 1: Mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), *t* value, and *d* effect size (*d*) of the LLS in males and females from nine countries

Country	Men			Women			*t*	*d*	Reference
	N	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*			
Egypt	194	51.5	10.8	216	50.7	11.5	0.72		Abdel-Khalek (2013b)
Lebanon	306	54.2	13.2	395	55.2	12.3	1.02		Abdel-Khalek (2015)
Kuwait	365	58.1	11.8	389	55.6	11.4	3.00**	0.2†	Abdel-Khalek (2012)
Qatar	113	59.0	10.4	133	58.5	11.4	0.36		Abdel-Khalek (2013c)
Algeria	331	55.9	13.3	446	57.6	12.1	1.66		Abdel-Khalek & Zeinel-Deen
Malaysia	105	64.6	9.9	133	64.4	8.9	0.16		Abdel-Khalek & Tekke (U.P.)
India	80	58.6	12.6	290	61.6	7.84	2.01*	0.25†	Abdel-Khalek & Singh (U.P.)
Iran	-	-	-	145	61.1	11.4	-		Atef Vahid et al (2016)
USA	158	63.2	10.5	[males + females]			-		Abdel-Khalek & Lester (2012)

* p <.05
** p < .01
† small effect size

The inspection of Table 1 indicates that the only sex-related differences in LLS were in Kuwait (in favor of males), and India (in favor of females). However, the effect sizes were small. Furthermore, the highest mean score on LLS was with the male and female samples from Malaysia, followed by the USA participants (males and females combined). The highest mean scores on LoL among males were found in the samples of Qatar, India, and Kuwait, respectively, and in the female samples from India, Iran, Qatar, and Algeria, respectively. On the other hand, the lowest mean scores on LLS were found in the samples from Egypt and Lebanon (males), and from Egypt (females). It is interesting to note that the correlation between males and females on LL was very high (r = .934; p < .001).

Table 2 sets out the comparison of the mean total LLS scores among the nine countries (t – tests).

Table 2: Pairwise comparison (*t* values) of the LLS in males (upper matrix) and females (Lower matrix)

	Egypt	Lebanon	Kuwait	Qatar	Algeria	Malaysia	India	Iran	USA
Egypt	-	2.50**	6.66***	6.01***	4.13***	10.58***	4.42***	-	10.27***
Lebanon	4.51***	-	4.00***	3.89***	1.62	8.48***	2.75**	-	8.00***
Kuwait	5.04***	0.47	-	0.78	2.30	5.67***	0.33	-	4.91***
Qatar	6.19***	2.83**	2.53**	-	2.54	4.07***	0.23	-	3.27***
Algeria	7.12***	2.85**	2.46*	0.79	-	7.18***	1.70	-	6.58***
Malaysia	12.47***	9.30***	9.13***	4.71***	7.08***	-	3.51	-	1.10
India	12.01***	8.30***	8.12***	2.84**	5.44***	3.12	-	-	2.81**
Iran	8.47**	5.22***	4.96***	1.90*	3.16***	2.70	0.48	-	-
USA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2 indicates that the vast majority of comparisons among the nine countries on LL were statistically significant, particularly between high LLS-score countries such as Malaysia and USA on the one hand, and the low LLS-score countries such as Egypt and Lebanon on the other.

Table 3 presents the mean scores on LLS, the world happiness ranking (Helliwell et al., 2017), per capita GDP (USD), and the unemployment rate in the nine countries.

Table: 3Love of Life (LL) mean scores, the world happiness ranking (WHR), gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and unemployment percentage (Un.%)

Country	LL		W H R	GDP	Un %
	Men	Women			
Egypt	51.5	50.7	4.735	3477.85	11.90
Lebanon	54.2	55.2	5.225	8257.29	6.70
Kuwait	58.1	55.6	6.105	27359.23	2.40
Qatar	59.0	58.5	6.375	59324.34	0.10
Algeria	55.9	57.6	5.872	3916.88	11.70
Malaysia	64.6	64.4	6.084	11031.82	3.30
India	58.6	61.6	4.315	1709.59	3.60
Iran	61.1	61.1	4.692	8649.95	12.20
USA	63.2	63.2	6.993	57638.16	4.90

Note: The GDP and unemployment percentage are from: (www.theglobaleconomy.com) Source: World Bank.

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed for the data in Table 3. Table 4 presents the results.

Table: 4Pearson correlations (*r*) between Love of Life (LL), World Happiness Ranking (WHR), gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, and unemployment rate (Un. %) among men and women in the nine countries.

r with LL	WHR	GDP	Un %
Men	.469	.409	-.432
Women	.296	.246	-.348

Table 4 indicates that the correlations of the LL with the WHR and GDP were positive but negative with the unemployment percentage. However, all these correlations were not significant due to the small number of the samples (nine).

4. DISCUSSION

In the era of positive psychology, studies on the human strengths have burgeoned. One of the main topics in this endeavor is subjective well-being (SWB). It includes other constructs such as happiness, satisfaction with life, and mental health, as well as many other positive constructs and traits. Love of life was hypothesized as a new construct in the SWB domain. It represents a positive regard toward life and appreciation of it. Using the Love of Life Scale (LLS), several studies and university dissertations were carried out.

The current investigation has fulfilled its main objective which is to identify the differences in LLS among nine countries. The present results revealed two interesting aspects. First, the sex-related differences in LL were statistically significant only in two countries, namely Kuwait and India. However, Kuwaiti males obtained the highest mean LL score, whereas Indian females had the highest mean LL score. This result deserves closer scrutiny on the basis of many aspects such as sex-roles, socialization, child-rearing practices, the country's resources and opportunities for both sexes in the two societies. Second, the association between the scores of males and females on LL was statistically significant and very high ($r = .934$; $p < .001$). This finding may be elucidated in light of the approximately similar conditions for both sexes in the same country regarding study, work, and life in general.

When comparing the mean scores on LL (t-test) among the nine countries, the majority of comparisons were statistically significant, particularly between the high and low LLS scorers (see Table 2). Furthermore, the LL was correlated with two important economic parameters, namely per capita income (GDP) and the unemployment percentage, as well as with the World Happiness ranking (WHR). Results indicated positive correlations between LLS and both GDP and WHR, but negative correlations with the unemployment percentage. However, as expected, the correlations did not reach the statistical level because of the small sample size.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the present study suggest that the samples from high-income countries tend to have high LL in proportion to low-income countries. This is probably due to the fact that high-income countries provide their citizens with a better standard of living (Ahuvia, 2002). Moreover, the current results indicate a degree of validity for the LLS at a cross-cultural level.

6. LIMITATIONS

Despite the large number of participants in the present research (N = 3,799), the analysis was based on the total scores on LL in men and women from nine countries. Therefore, it would be suitable to replicate this study using more samples from different developed and underdeveloped countries. Further research would be warranted.

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